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*The Old Booksellers
of New York and
Other Papers*



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THE OLD BOOKSELLERS OF NEW
YORK AND OTHER
PAPERS

Engraved on Copper

by E.D. French, from the ORIGINAL in the NEW YORK MAGAZINE 1790.



Designed by

An E. View of TRINITY CHURCH N.Y.C.K.



THE OLD BOOKSELLERS
OF NEW YORK
AND OTHER PAPERS

BY
WILLIAM LORING ANDREWS



NEW YORK : ANNO DOMINI ONE THOU-
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BY WILLIAM LORING ANDREWS

PREFATORY NOTE

THIS brief account of the old booksellers of New York includes—with very few exceptions—only those members of the Fraternity who came within the cognizance of the writer, and who now have passed off the stage. Short as is the story, it covers a period during which the old book trade had its rise and became a permanently established business in this city.

These papers were prepared for and have appeared in part, in the pages of "The Bookman." They are now presented in book form, with embellishments consisting of head and tail pieces, initial letters and three full-page copper plate engravings by Mr. E. Davis French.

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ED French sc

NASSAU STREET, NEW-YORK.



*“ There’s nothing hath enduring youth
Eternal newness, strength unfailing.
Except old books, old friends, old truth
That’s ever battling—still prevailing.”*

I

WILLIAM GOWANS



IN the opening chapter of the Notes to Peabody’s “Views in New York and Its Environs,” published in 1831, Theodore B. Fay, co-editor of the *New York Mirror* thus describes the city of his indwelling, and depicts in these grandiloquent terms the enviable estate of his fellow townsmen and the proud future which unveiled its glittering vista before them :

“ A *vast* city, with its bristling forest of masts and spires, sending forth the hum of more than 200,000 inhabitants. Freedom,

peace and plenty are in their dwellings, and their destiny is as unclouded as the glorious vault of Heaven, which stretches with all its stars above their heads."

The Gothamite of the first half of the 19th century possessed implicit faith as well as unbounded pride in his fair and thriving city. A dabbler in statistics of this period, who applied to his computations the plain and simple "rule of three," developed the astounding fact that by the year 1900 New York city should contain a population of over 5,000,000 souls. To be precise, 5,257,193. He admits that wars, pestilences and political convulsions, such as from time to time befall all communities, might possibly interfere with this steady arithmetical progression; nevertheless, he is confident that by the expiration of the time specified the population of New York will exceed that of any other city on the face of the earth, Pekin alone excepted. London would be left far in the background. Four years after the date of this prediction (December 16th, 1835), the "Great Fire" swept with its besom of destruction over the larger portion of the business section of the city of New York, and left it a mass of smoking ruins. Six hundred and seventy-four houses, many of

them occupied by the largest shipping and wholesale dry-goods merchants, were, with most of their contents, burned to the ground. Our prophet had not reckoned with the demon of fire ; still, this widespread disaster stayed only momentarily the onward march of the metropolis. Phœnix-like, it rose from its ashes, and, while it has not attained the full measure of greatness ciphered out for it with such facility by the optimist whom we have quoted, still we venture to claim that the chief city of the Western world has fairly fulfilled the rosy promise of its youth.

In the year 1828 there came to this busy, bustling, aspiring town, from the wilds of Indiana, one William Gowans, in search of fame and fortune. He was a youth of twenty-five, a Scotchman by birth, and whilom farmer and flat-boatman on the Mississippi. His experience when "a youth navigating the wild Ohio and the wilder Mississippi" may be given best by the pen picture drawn by himself. "Then there were no byways for boats to escape the rugged falls of the Ohio as there now are. All

NOTE.—The family emigrated to America from Lesmahagon, Scotland, in 1821. They settled for a while in Philadelphia, and then moved to Fredonia, Crawford County, Indiana, traveling by wagon via Pittsburgh.

had to pass through the roaring straits of Scylla and Charybdis. We had, therefore, to plunge over unhesitatingly. Swifter than an arrow from an Indian's bow, or thought, or lightning, or the soul's departure from the body. Not a house stood upon the point of land formed by the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, nor was the land even under cultivation, but in its primitive, wild, dreary solitude. I understand that it is now the site of a large, busy city (Cairo). Seventy miles below, on the west bank of the Mississippi, stood the deserted village of New Madrid, consisting of a few log houses, apparently empty, and the surrounding forest all dead, caused, as I learned, by an earthquake a few years ago. The land at this place sunk ten feet from the effects of the shock, and no doubt the concussion caused these monarchs of the forest to wither and die. Fifty miles still further down stood the now city of Memphis. The captain of our sluggish-moving boat landed at this place. I accompanied him up the bank, the river being low at the time, for the purpose of buying a supply of whiskey. The town, I remember, consisted of log houses inhabited by a very poor class of people. After falling down below this town

about 50 miles, we met with no settlement until we reached the vicinity of Walnut Hill, now Vicksburgh, the distance being about 600 miles. The only music in the daytime which regaled our senses was the puffing and distressed moaning of the high-pressured steamers which occasionally passed up and down the river, as the case might be, and as an afterpiece, the wild screaming of the numerous flocks of parquets which travel along the bank of the river after descending to a certain latitude; and in the night, the wolf's wild howl, not on Onolaska's shore, but the banks of the gloomy and solitary Mississippi. The only human beings we fell in with during this descent, which took six weeks, were certain roving, half-civilized whites who had pitched their tents at certain points for the purpose of cutting and preparing fuel for the steamboats passing up and down, and numbers of the native sons of the forest, who could be seen every now and then paddling their light canoes close in to the shore if ascending, and on the contrary, in the centre of the river if downward bound. At first these savage-faced, painted men somewhat alarmed me; but they frequently paid us a visit by coming alongside and on board

of our own lazy craft. After becoming somewhat familiar with these grim, black-haired, half-naked fellow-beings, I began rather to like them, and wished for their frequent return to break up our monotony. They left the impression upon me that they were both generous and confiding. A party came on board one day; one of them could speak a little English. He informed us that one of their number was condemned to death for having murdered one of the tribe when intoxicated. We urged him to make his escape, as he appeared to be at liberty. We even offered to take him with us in our boat, but they all declared, as we could understand them, that that would be of no use, for in the event of his non-appearance for execution on the day appointed, his wife or one of his children would have to suffer in his stead. The three great rivers which discharge their heavy contents into the Mississippi—the Arkansas, the Yazoo and the Red rivers—at those points where they lost themselves in the great father of waters, were all solitary, heavy-timbered wildernesses. Not a human being appeared to have disturbed their native wild grandeur. Now I understand that at each and all of these points are busy towns, and likely to

become large cities. At this time, according to his biographers, Abraham Lincoln must have been a fellow-boatman with me on these rivers, although I never saw him to my knowledge."

For a twelvemonth after his arrival in New York Mr. Gowans was engaged in a variety of occupations—namely, that of gardener, stevedore, stone-cutter, news-vender and "super" in the old Bowery Theatre. Evidently he was prepared to turn his hand to any honest means of livelihood. But it was not long before he entered on his vocation, for in Longworth's Directory of New York City, 1829 to 1830, we find the name of William *Gowan*, bookstall, 119 Chatham Street, house 750 Greenwich Street, so by that time he was established, in an humble way, in the business which was to be his lifelong pursuit. Trade in second-hand books, doubtless, was coy and hard to win, and at the outset of his career he was obliged to seek a market for his merchandise by carrying it in a basket to the doors of his customers. In one of his rounds he chanced upon a benevolent Quaker, named Blatchley, who, apparently unsolicited, loaned him the sum of twenty-five dollars. When some time

later the young man came to return the money, the considerate old gentleman suggested that he might have further need of this special capital, and that he had better keep it a little longer. His benefactor lived to see him established in, and paid him frequent visits at, his Nassau Street store.

Mr. Gowans informs us that it was largely through the instrumentality of the father of Thomas Cole, the artist, who was a bookseller in a small way, that he himself adopted the profession. He it was who initiated him into the secrets of the second-hand book trade, disclosing his manner and mode of purchase, and the profit he made upon his literary wares.

The bookstall at 119 Chatham Street was simply a row of shelves, protected at night and in the owner's absence during the day on his book-selling peregrinations with wooden shutters, an iron bar and a padlock. It was shortly succeeded by a store at 121 Chatham Street, corner of Pearl. In 1830 he occupied the "Arcade," between John Street and Maiden Lane.

His business ventures must have been attended with a moderate degree of success, for in 1840-41 Mr. Gowans made a visit to Europe, probably not so much on

pleasure bent as with an eye to business. He did not find London as attractive as has Mr. Elias Dexter, the old and well-known print and picture dealer, who never has returned to these shores since he left them, twenty years or more ago, on a *flying* visit to the British metropolis. In a letter from London during his sojourn there Mr. Gowans writes: "All my wanderings and all that I have seen since I left New York have had a tendency to raise America and its institutions in my estimation. I will feel happier in America, should I ever be so fortunate as to return, than ever I have been heretofore. America is the country for a man making his way in the world. In this country, so far as I can see, if you happen to be *born among the mud* you must remain there."

On his return Mr. Gowans devoted his attention for a time to the book auction business, at a place called the Long Room, at 169 Broadway, but soon resumed his second-hand book trade, for in 1842 he was established at 204 Broadway, opposite St. Paul's Chapel, up-stairs. His subsequent locations, as given on the covers of his catalogues, are as follows:

1844—63 Liberty Street, up-stairs.

1848—178 Fulton Street, opposite St. Paul's Churchyard.

1856—81 to 85 Centre Street (Caxton Building).

1863—115 Nassau Street.

He seems to have enjoyed the proximity of the quiet graveyard of St. Paul's Chapel. Perhaps he found it conducive to a quiet and reflective turn of mind; or was it, on the contrary, the noisy attractions of Scudder's American Museum that allured him? This popular place of amusement stood within a stone's throw of his premises, on the site of the old Herald Building. It contained specimens of natural history and cosmoramic views, to which the charms of music and sundry "extraneous exhibitions" were added to give variety to the entertainment. The dulcet strains of the brass band stationed upon the balcony in front of this building—but hidden behind the flaring posters which covered its front—on pleasant afternoons, must have penetrated to the inner recesses of Mr. Gowans's stores on Fulton and Nassau Streets. These "al fresco" instrumentalists were fair-weather performers only, for Fitz-Greene Halleck tells us, in his poem of "Fanny," that "music ceases when it rains in Scudder's

balcony." Afterward, as Barnum's Museum, this building became the home of the Mermaid, the Woolly Horse and the Perpetual Motion, and the same melodious method of attracting the attention of the passer-by was successfully practiced.

Mr. Gowans's store at 115 Nassau Street extended through to Theatre Alley, a distance of over 100 feet. He occupied the store floor, basement and sub-cellar, which in time became crowded with books and pamphlets from floor to ceiling. His stock grew and never diminished. Books lay everywhere in seemingly dire confusion, piled upon tables and on the floor, like Pelion upon Ossian, until they finally toppled over, and the few narrow alleys which had originally been left between the rows became well-nigh impassable. There was no artificial light in the cellar, and the book-hunter must fain grope his way—if permitted—through the bewildering maze by the light of a small tin sperm-oil lamp. The freedom of Mr. Gowans's bookstore was not presented to every passer-by.

There was a certain attempt at arrangement and classification, but the owner of this vast store of printed matter could have had but an imperfect knowledge of what it

contained; although I fancy that few of the real book rarities that came into his possession were overlooked, and I am quite sure they were seldom undervalued by him. His prices, when once fixed, were as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. They were marked in plain figures in the front of the book, and the cost price in cipher at the bottom of the twenty-fifth page.

I am told by Mr. E. W. Nash (Mr. Gowans's clerk for twenty years), that at the time of his employer's death the stock was estimated at 300,000 bound volumes, besides pamphlets innumerable. Eight tons weight of these were sold by his executors at four and one-quarter cents per pound. A few years earlier he could have realized ten cents per pound (including covers), and could he have smuggled them into the Southern Confederacy during the war he would have reaped a fortune.

Although a large proportion of this mass of books and pamphlets was of small interest or value to the bibliophile, still one possessed of sufficient energy and perseverance, and with abundant leisure to delve into these semi-subterranean stores, occasionally might return with a handful of

treasure-trove. In a letter to the *Journal of Commerce*, dated January 15th, 1886, Dr. William C. Prime records a discovery which he made in the cover of a book which he had unearthed in this dusky depository: "It was a small quarto volume, containing two books bound in one, a work of Jerome Gebuiller on the origin and ancestry of Ferdinand, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, printed at Haganau in 1530, and an account of the siege of Vienna by the Turks, under Suleiman, in 1529, printed at Augsburg, 1530. The volume was bound in paper boards covered with calfskin. Inside one of these covers were found the following sheets, which had been pasted and pressed together to form the binder's board, a common practice with the 16th century binders:

First.—A sheet printed in a large and beautiful black letter, four pages of Low Dutch poetry. Second.—Two sheets from a book, "Exposito Sacri Canonis," a small 16 mo. page, Roman type. Third.—Two sheets from a small (16 mo.) Book of Hours, black letter, late 15th or early 16th century. Fourth.—The last sheet of a black letter 12 mo. book, religious, in Dutch, having one full-page woodcut, the double eagle device

of the printer and the colophon of Vosterman. Fifth.—Four pages or one sheet of a neatly printed missal in red and black. Sixth.—Two sheets of a black letter book in Low Dutch—prose and poetry—with colophon of Vosterman, no date or wood-cut device. Seventh.—Two sheets from an edition of Despauterius's Latin Grammar, circa 1542. Eighth.—Some sheets of brown paper."

An enterprising firm of booksellers in this city placard their window in this enticing fashion: "25,000 books at our price, 50,000 at your price, 100,000 at any price." It was books in the last-named category of which Mr. Gowans was the most liberal purchaser. He, or his representative, was in constant attendance at the auction room. When the auctioneer could obtain no other bid, the lot would be knocked down at a nominal price to "Mr. Chase," Mr. Gowans's commercial pseudonym. Thus he bought extensively without making serious inroads into his capital.

At these auction sales Mr. Gowans appears to have been addicted to a practice of interrupting the auctioneer with questions concerning the book that was passing under the hammer. When the celebrated John

Keese filled the "pulpit," Mr. Gowans always found his match. A work entitled "History of the Taters," was offered for sale.

"Is not that Tartars?" asked Mr. Gowans.

"No; their wives were the tartars," was the immediate reply. There are many amusing anecdotes still in circulation that illustrate the ready wit of this popular member of the book auction firm of Cooley, Keese & Co. People flocked to their evening sales as they would to a play, and the comedian Burton, it is said, regarded them as no contemptible rival to his theatre in Chambers Street.

A full list of Mr. Gowans's customers and casual visitors would go far toward supplying the material for a social register and a roll-call of the men of letters of the day. In it we find the names of John Howard Payne, Fitz-Greene Halleck, MacDonald Clark, Millard Fillmore, Rufus Choate, Audubon, the ornithologist, William Cullen Bryant, Dr. Bethune, Dr. William C. Prime, John Carter Brown, Henry Ward Beecher, Dr. S. S. Purple, Dr. Brandreth, of pill fame, Hon. John Bigelow, Robert Balmano, John Romeyn Broadhead, George Brinley, William Allen Butler, George Bancroft, S. L.

M. Barlow, Frederick S. Cozzens, George W. Childs, Alexander J. Cotheal, George William Curtis, Judge Charles P. Daly, Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck, David Dudley Field, S. C. Goodrich (Peter Parley), James A. Garfield (before the war), Washington Irving, James Lenox, Daniel D. Lord, Benson J. Lossing, Henry W. Longfellow, George P. Morris, Bishop McIlvane, Henry C. Murphy, James Parton, Henry T. Tuckerman, Richard Grant White, Gulian C. Verplanck, General Dix, and so on. The list might be extended indefinitely.

In one of the notes with which his catalogues are interspersed, and which bear the singular nom de plume of "Western Memorabilia," Mr. Gowans informs us that in 1847 he met the "venerable widow of Alexander Hamilton, and took the opportunity of making several inquiries of her regarding Washington, which met with ready and satisfactory answers." He noted that her eyes still possessed their youthful brilliancy, although her other features showed all the marks of extreme old age, as she was then nearly one hundred years old.

Mr. Gowans states that he frequently came in contact with John Howard Payne, and that he impressed him as a melancholy,

despondent, heart-broken man. The last time he saw the poet was on the eve of his departure on his mission to the Barbary States. He said he had had great difficulty in procuring his appointment, and was compelled to bear his own expenses in repairing to his post of duty—the Government having refused to defray them. Mr. Gowans foretold correctly, that notwithstanding all the songs, dramas, newspaper and magazine criticisms, and biographical sketches Payne had written, posterity would know him only by his single song of “Home, Sweet Home.”

MacDonald Clarke, “the mad poet,” was a daily visitor at Mr. Gowans’s store for more than twenty years. “He appeared,” says Mr. Gowans, “to have the simplicity of a child, the innocence of the dove, but none of the cunning of the serpent. By nature a poet, but wanting cultivation sadly; nor would he read Shakspeare or Milton, nor any of the great poets, ‘lest,’ said he, ‘I should spoil my own originality.’”

From Mr. Audubon, the author of “The Birds of America,” Mr. Gowans received the following account of his unfortunate experience with his monumental work: “I did not sell more than forty copies of my

work in England, Ireland, Scotland and France, of which Louis Philippe took ten, and offered to subscribe for a hundred if the work was published in Paris." The following subscribers received their copies, but never paid for them: George IV., The Duchess of Clarence, The Marquis of Londonderry, The Princess of Hesse-Homburg; an Irish Lord (whose name Audubon could not give) took two, and paid for neither—the same could be said of a wealthy citizen of the United States. Audubon further stated that he sold only seventy-five copies of his book in America (twenty-six of which were sold in New York and twenty-four in Boston); that the work altogether cost him twenty-seven thousand pounds sterling, and that by it he lost twenty-five thousand dollars.

When Edwin Forrest first appeared upon the boards of the Bowery Theatre, Mr. Gowans was connected with that institution in a minor capacity, and enjoyed the opportunity of seeing him act nightly. In 1865, thirty-five years later, he saw the tragedian again, in "Richelieu" and "Hamlet," and declared, that as an actor he pleased him better in 1830. "Nevertheless," he states, "his popularity appeared undimin-

ished, and at all the performances the theatre was literally crammed from roof to foundation."

Shortly after the first arrival of Fanny Kemble, Mr. Gowans witnessed her performance at the Park Theatre, where immense crowds flocked to see her, and declared that she was "matchless as an actress, and divine as a young and beautiful woman." Fifteen years later Mr. Gowans saw and heard her again in the New York Tabernacle, at Broadway and Worth Street, and found that she had grown stout and unattractive.

Mr. Gowans devotes much space in his "memorabilia" to that singular character, Eleazer Williams, the reputed lost Prince of the House of Bourbon, son of Louis XVI., who was said to have been committed to the care of some unknown person, and by him either carried or sent to America and consigned to a certain tribe of Indians in the western part of New York State, who adopted him and brought him up in their wild habits and customs. By some means he obtained a good education, and after due preparation was ordained by Bishop Hobart, in 1826, and as a minister of the Episcopal Church passed the best part of his life among the Indians. To Mr. Gowans he

appeared to have a striking resemblance to Louis XVI. as represented by the engraved portraits that he had seen. "Large, massy, full face, aquiline nose, dark eyes, swarthy complexion, heavy, corpulent frame, and he spoke in slow, solemn tones." Dr. John W. Francis, the well-known physician, and a recognized authority on old New York and New Yorkers, was acquainted with Williams for half a century, and he also thought he looked very like a Bourbon. But there have been no less than thirty pretenders who from time to time have posed as the ill-fated Dauphin. Mr. Gowans once asked Eleazer Williams his own views upon this matter. His reply was that "ambition, worldly pride, vanity and notoriety would seem to prompt his carnal mind to adopt the view that he was the actual heir to the French throne; but again," he said, "Christian humility and a consciousness of my position forbid me to entertain such worldly and ambitious views. I therefore have left the whole subject to those who feel any interest in such discussions, to make of it what they may." This is a method of unburdening one's conscience which recalls the story of the artless maiden who, having decided that her fine gowns

were leading her to perdition, generously bestowed her entire wardrobe of ball-dresses upon her dear sisters.

For eight months Mr. Gowans lived in the same house with Edgar Allen Poe. He tells us that he "saw much of and often had an opportunity to converse with him," and he testifies that he never saw him in the least affected by liquor or knew him to descend to any known vice, while he was one of the most courteous, gentlemanly and intelligent companions he had ever met with. His wife he describes as of matchless beauty and loveliness, and of a temper and disposition of surpassing sweetness, and he quotes these fond lines of Poe addressed to her:

“ But our love it was stronger by far than the love
 Of those who were older than we,
 Of many far wiser than we ;
 And neither the angels in Heaven above,
 Nor the demons under the sea,
 Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
 Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.”

In a note covering more than two pages of his catalogue, Mr. Gowans claims to have been instrumental in giving the *New York Herald* its start in life. Dr. Benjamin Brandereth, the renowned pill-maker, made Mr.

Gowans an agent for the sale of his pills, and wishing to give them as wide an advertisement as possible, consulted him as to the best paper for his purpose. Mr. Gowans suggested the *New York Herald*, which had lately begun its career. Dr. Brandreth went to Mr. Bennett, made terms with him for advertising, and for a long time paid him a considerable sum weekly for the use of his columns.

Mr. Gowans frequently met Fitz-Greene Halleck, who was then keeping accounts in the private real estate office of John Jacob Astor, and only occasionally indulging his poetic vein, because, as he is reported to have said, being under the necessity of earning a livelihood, he could not afford to incur the adverse criticism aroused thereby. He had already more reputation as a poet than was good for him in the esteem of men engaged in business pursuits. The old New England theory that a genius must necessarily be deficient in common sense, and nigh worthless as a business man, is not yet entirely abandoned in this commercial community. Mr. Gowans covers more than two pages with reminiscences of the poet; but they contain little that is new of interest in relation to one of the most grace-

ful writers of verse that ever made our city his adopted home.

Another well-known character who frequented the old book shop was that indefatigable collector of books and "auld nicknackets, Rusty airn caps and jinglin' jackets," John Allan. He haunted it daily. After the sale of Mr. Allan's effects in May, 1864, Mr. Gowans published a price list of the articles sold, with the names of the purchasers. From his introduction to this pamphlet we abstract the following paragraphs :

"I had the happiness, as well as the good fortune, to have been intimately acquainted with him (John Allan) for over twenty-five years. During that time, and long before, it was his steady, constant and persistent aim to be adding to his unique collection by all means within his reach. On many of these occasions, after having secured a new accession, he would come tripping into my store, with a foot as noiseless as that of Grimalkin, and spirits as buoyant and joyful as a youth let loose from school.

* * * * *

"It would be out of place to enumerate the principal articles, with a history of their peculiarities, for that would take a volume much larger than the catalogue itself.

I will, however, mention the four which he prided himself most in possessing, namely, the folio containing the three hundred portraits of and views relating to Mary Queen of Scots; George Withers's Book of Emblems; Elliott's Indian version of the Bible, and the Kilmarnock edition of the works of Robert Burns.

* * * * *

“Inasmuch as no collection like that of Mr. Allan's for intrinsic value and unparalleled rarity has heretofore been offered for public competition in America, it will form an epoch in the history of the sale of literary, artistic and antiquarian property in the United States, and will in some measure test the popular taste for collecting such heir-looms.”

The test proved eminently satisfactory. The sale was an unqualified success, and one that could not be repeated to-day. Our book collectors have become too knowing and fastidious, and Mr. Allan's books were not, as a rule, in superlative condition.

In an irregular fashion Mr. Gowans's catalogues are thus interspersed with notes of a more or less interesting character. They are not, however, so voluminous as at a first glance appears, as the same notes

are made to do service over and over again.

Urbanity of manner was not one of Mr. Gowans's prominent characteristics, but he could be genial and communicative when in the humor, and with those who had won his esteem and confidence. He seems to have entertained no feeling of rivalry toward his brother bibliopoles. In one of his notes he refers most pleasantly and in highly complimentary terms to his neighboring bookseller, Joseph Sabin, of whose knowledge of books he justly entertained a high opinion.

Mr. Gowans issued in all twenty-eight catalogues, the first in 1842, and the last in 1870, the year of his death. The later ones were carefully compiled and neatly printed on good paper at the press of Joel Munsell, the well-known Albany printer, in his day one of the leading typographers of the country. In 1833 Mr. Gowans added to his other "literary business" that of publisher, his first venture being "Phædo; or the Immortality of the Soul," by Plato, translated from the Greek by Charles L. Stanford. His second book was "The Phœnix," a collection of old and rare fragments, viz.: "Morals of Confucius," "Oracles of Zo-

roaster," etc. In addition to the foregoing he published, at various periods from 1833 down to 1870, about thirty-five volumes, including five historical reprints, which were issued under the title of "Gowans's Bibliotheca Americana."

Mr. Gowans married when in middle life, a Miss Bradley, of New York, with whom he lived happily for ten years. She died leaving no children. His own death came suddenly. He was stricken with apoplexy while walking in the streets on Thanksgiving eve, 1870, and died at his home, No. 13 Second Street, on the following Sunday. He was buried beside his wife in Woodlawn Cemetery, where at the time of her death he had purchased a plot.

The auction sale of the mass of printed matter which had accumulated at 115 Nassau Street began January 30, 1871. The catalogue was in sixteen parts, containing 2,476 pages. The sale netted about thirty-three thousand dollars. The pecuniary result to his heirs, a brother and his children living in Kentucky, would have been still more gratifying if more books and pamphlets had been added to the eight tons which were sold for paper stock. Many of the lots brought less than the cost of cataloguing

them. The expenses connected with the sale are said to have amounted to over \$15,000, or to thirty per cent. of the total sum paid by the book-buying public for this huge accumulation of paper and printer's ink.

II

JOSEPH SABIN



WHEN the bookseller and bibliographer, Joseph Sabin, succumbed to overwork, "Killed by a Dictionary" was suggested as his most fitting epitaph. He was a strong advocate of total abstinence, and in his younger days wrote and lectured upon the subject of temperance. He practiced what he preached—water pure and simple was his exclusive beverage, and he eschewed tobacco in all its forms; but in point of mental activity he failed to exercise a corresponding degree of moderation. To the cares of a considerable business in the importation and sale of books he added the labors of a publisher, the drudgery of compiling catalogues, and the arduous

calling of a book auctioneer, and then took upon his broad shoulders a literary burden of indefinite proportions in his "Dictionary of Books Relating to America."

This indefatigable worker in the twin fields of bibliography and bibliopolism was born in 1821 in Branston, Northamptonshire, England, and at the age of fourteen was apprenticed to Charles Richards, an Oxford bookseller and stationer. Two years after the completion of his seven years' apprenticeship he married, and in 1848 emigrated to the United States, arriving in New York on July 3d. He established himself at first in Philadelphia, and purchased a farm of thirty acres at Chestnut Hill, which would have greatly enriched his heirs if they had retained possession of it until the present time.

In 1850 Mr. Sabin removed to New York, and was connected for a time with the well-known book auction firm of Cooley and Keese, where he was principally employed in preparing catalogues of the better class of books. In the panic year of 1857 he returned to Philadelphia and engaged in business as an importer of fine books. At the outbreak of the Civil War he lost many of his customers, and again sought to retrieve

his fortunes in this city. He opened first a book auction-house, and then a bookshop in Canal Street. Again he returned to his farm and began work upon his "Dictionary of Books Relating to America from its Discovery to the Present Time." A year or two later found him once more in New York in the employ of the Riverside Press publishers, Hurd and Houghton. In 1864 he ventured into business on his own account, and purchased for \$9,000 the stock and goodwill of Michael Noonan, a genial and popular Irishman who had built up quite a respectable business in second-hand and new books. From No. 84 Mr. Sabin removed to 64 Nassau Street, where he continued in business until his death. Nassau Street from John to Beekman was then the "Rialto" of the old book trade, and the place where book-hunters most did love to congregate.

Mr. Sabin's sales in the ten years from 1864-74 aggregated over \$1,000,000, and during this period he supplied with some of their choicest treasures many of the public and private libraries then in course of formation; among them those of Almon W. Griswold and William Menzies, of New York, and Henry C. Murphy and T. W.

Field, of Brooklyn. The two most prominent American collectors of the first half of this century, John Carter Brown, of Providence, and James Lenox, of New York, had nearly ceased their purchases when Mr. Sabin came to New York, and he supplied them with comparatively few books. Rare Americana were Mr. Sabin's specialty, and several of his customers were advantageously influenced by him in turning their attention in this direction. Many of the books which these fortunate individuals procured through him have become, so far as booksellers are concerned, simply fondly cherished memories. What book-hunter dreams nowadays of finding in a book-stall such nuggets as the first New York Directory, the first edition of Andre's "Cow Chase," Symmes's "Late Fight at Pigg-wacket," or a copy of Harriot's "Virginia," the rare English De Bry, which was sold to Mr. Kalbfleisch for \$1,250, a long price in those days, but a short one in this year of grace 1895. Mr. Sabin published a facsimile of this excessively rare book.

Rarities in the way of English literature were by no means neglected by the bibliopole of 64 Nassau Street, although the present fierce demand for first editions of early

English writers was still slumbering. The set of five Waltons sold in this city within a few months came, I believe, from Sabin's, and the first alone brought more than two and one-half times as much as was originally paid for the set. Several copies of the first folio Shakespeare passed through Mr. Sabin's hands, including that of Sir William Tite ; and the early Chaucers, Miltons, Ben Jonsons, Spensers, and Drydens, now sought for with so much eagerness by book collectors, were far from being strangers to the shelves of his bookshop.

In those days there was on the part of book-buyers, both here and abroad, a tolerance of big books, which no longer prevails to the same extent. The "Musée Français" and "Musée Royal," Robert's "Holy Land," Boydell's Shakespeare, Hogarth's works, and the whole long list of elephantine folios were staple articles in the second-hand bookshops. In "extra-illustrated" books the same preference for folios and large quartos was manifested, obviously because they permitted the insertion of large prints, and so widened the "extra-illustrator's" field of selection. Bibliomania in this form may be said to have reached its culminating point during the period of which we write.

An English dame of those days greatly distinguished herself by "extra illustrating" the Old and New Testaments at a cost, we were informed, of over £10,000, not including the expense of the book-case, or book-room, whichever it was, that was found necessary to contain this monument of enthusiastic Grangerism.

The sale by the founder of the house at an early stage in its history of an "extra-illustrated" Shakespeare for \$3,000 is one of the never-to-be-forgotten reminiscences of Joseph Sabin and Sons.

The publications of Mr. Sabin, aside from the Dictionary, were a monthly magazine called the *Bibliopolist: A Literary Register and Repository of Notes and Queries*, etc., begun in 1869, and continued until April, 1877; "A Bibliography of Bibliography; or, a Handy Book about Books which Relate to Books"; and a series of American reprints, ten of which were issued in quarto size and seven in octavo; large and small papers were made of each. It was the day of privately printed books and "large papers" (not necessarily large *books* because they were large papers), books which have been aptly described as "mere rivulets of text in a meadow of margin." A reprint, in three

volumes, of Garden's "Anecdotes of the Revolution" published in three sizes—ordinary paper, large paper, and what Mr. Sabin dubbed "blanket folio"—capped the climax in these typographical absurdities, and brought them into merited disfavor. They, however, reappeared later disguised under the name of *éditions de luxe*.

The first important collection of books catalogued by Mr. Sabin was that of the comedian, W. E. Burton, in 1860. In 1864 he catalogued the collection of the old Scotch antiquarian, John Allan, of pleasant memory. The title on the cover of this catalogue was not composed by Mr. Sabin. In his opinion it was awkwardly constructed, and, not being willing to father it, he signed himself as "Compiler of this catalogue, *the cover excepted.*"

Among the one hundred and fifty or more libraries which Mr. Sabin is said to have catalogued was that of the Shakespearean scholar, Richard Grant White, who remarked, as the result of his observations, that if anybody thought that bibliography was an easy subject he should serve an apprenticeship under Joseph Sabin.

The book auction sales at which Mr. Sabin officiated included some of the most

important that have occurred in this country. The last at which he presided was the great Brinley sale. This was divided into five parts, and the sale of the third part was set for March, 1881, but was postponed on account of Mr. Sabin's ill-health. His family had already been informed by his physician of the fatal character of his illness. On April 4th Mr. Sabin began the sale, and conducted it to a satisfactory conclusion. On this occasion he had the pleasure and high bibliopolistic distinction of selling the only copy of the Mazarin Bible that has ever been brought under the hammer on this side of the Atlantic. The book was bought by the late Hamilton Cole for \$8,000, and the sale created a sensation in the book-buying world, which was revived when the two volumes again appeared at auction in the dispersion of the collection of Mr. Brayton Ives, and were taken to Chicago at a ransom of \$14,800.

The preparation of the Dictionary was begun about 1860. The prospectus was issued in December, 1866, and the first part was published in 1867. It continued to make its appearance in parts at irregular intervals until the death of the author. It was his "old man of the sea." Early

morning hours, the small hours of the night, and stolen moments in cars and on ship-board were devoted to it. At Mr. Sabin's death eighty parts, describing over fifty-eight thousand lots, had been issued, bringing the work down in alphabetical order to the letters Pa. The manuscript left unpublished is now being revised by Mr. Wilberforce Eames, of the Lenox Library, and thirty-six additional parts have so far been printed, completing the work as far as the word Smith. In his process of revision Mr. Eames occasionally must meet with the handwriting of the founder of the institution he serves, as Mr. Lenox was especially interested in this particular work of Mr. Sabin, and rendered him valuable assistance by bringing him titles of rare books in his own collection, which were unobtainable from any other source.

Mr. Sabin was a genuine lover of books and a patient, painstaking student of bibliography. He was a better bibliophile than he was a merchant, and his customers would often find him more eager to discuss the bibliographical points of his literary wares than to effect a sale of them. It is not surprising that he should disrelish having his dictum called in question, and that

he sometimes met an assumption of superior knowledge with a show of impatience. A youth once brought him for sale a volume of the Mexican Boundary Survey, published by the United States Government. Mr. Sabin told him that it was not perfect, but should be in two volumes. The young man insisted that the book was perfect until Mr. Sabin closed the discussion by saying jocosely, "Young man, if that work was contained in one volume it would make a book as thick as your head."

Thirty years ago the art of bookbinding was not receiving in this country the attention now bestowed upon it. A step in advance is credited to Mr. Sabin, to wit, the substitution of calf for the cheaper and less durable sheepskin previously so extensively employed by American binders.

Mr. Sabin died in the harness. Against the advice of his physician, he undertook the auction of the third part of the Brinley Library, and his labors in connection with it may have hastened his death, which occurred at his Brooklyn home on Sunday, June 5th, 1881. His funeral services were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Collyer, and he was buried in Cypress Hills Cemetery.

They say that there is no money in the

old book business; however that may be, there is certainly in this, as in any other honorable pursuit, something quite as much to be coveted as financial success, and that is the regard and good-will of one's business associates. These Mr. Sabin enjoyed. Mr. John Pyne, his near neighbor for many years, said of Mr. Sabin at the time of his death, that he was the acknowledged head of his profession, and was loved and appreciated by all who knew him; and sums up a pleasant tribute to the memory of his friend in these words: "His love for rare books passed into knowledge which he used for the benefit of all who had the pleasure and profit of knowing him."

III

JOHN BRADBURN AND OTHERS



AMONG the Nassau Street "bookshops of olden time," whose alluring signs no longer salute the eye of the passing bibliophile, was that of John Bradburn, who came to this country in 1820 from County Westmeath, Ireland, where he was born in 1805. He began his career as a vender of

second-hand books some ten years later than William Gowans, and in the same humble way. Armed with a basket filled with books of travel and works on navigation he invaded the wharves and ships of the city, and drove a thriving trade with ships' captains and mates just home from a cruise and with money burning holes through their freshly lined pockets.

Mr. Bradburn's first place of business was on the southeastern corner of Fulton and Nassau Streets. In 1852 or 1853 he removed to the northwestern corner of Ann and Nassau Streets, where he remained until he retired from active business in 1868. The old book shops of his day were commonly supplied with outside shelves and counters, which were laden with books and pamphlets. Here loungers with literary tastes congregated the livelong day, sipping knowledge as the bee sips honey, and forming a feature of New York City street life which has passed almost entirely away.

Mr. Bradburn dealt largely in second-hand law, theological and medical books, and his shop was a veritable boon to impecunious students of theological seminaries and academies of medicine and to briefless attorneys and counsellors at law. Books of

a less utilitarian character, but possessed of more charms for the bibliophile, also found their way to his shop ; and the patient searcher for rarities might at any moment stumble upon one tucked away among the volumes clad in prosaic legal calf which lined his shelves.

When first I knew this veteran of the old book trade he was a pleasant-faced, elderly man, with an air of prosperity and contentment about him, in puzzling contrast to the surroundings of his dingy, contracted, but typical old bookshop. The book business prospered so well with Mr. Bradburn that he was able to make investments in such choice Manhattan real estate as Central Park and Fifth Avenue lots, the "unearned increment" of which in course of time made him well-to-do.

There is not much ozone about old books, nevertheless dealing in them appears to be conducive to longevity. C. S. Francis, to whom we have still to refer, died at the age of eighty-five; and I have had lately the gratification of sending Mr. Bradburn my congratulations upon his attainment, on April 5th, 1895, of his ninetieth birthday, in good health and the full possession of his faculties.

One of Mr. Bradburn's near neighbors was John Pyne, a "man of many friends," who, we are told, resembled Joseph Sabin in this, that he never smoked tobacco or used alcoholic liquors. Mr. Pyne removed from Nassau Street to the corner of Broadway and Astor Place. Not meeting with the success he had anticipated, he returned to his former stand, but found that many of his old customers had drifted away. He finally abandoned the second-hand book business and entered the Register's office of the City of New York, where he remained until his death, in 1894.

In Nassau Street, between Fulton and Ann Streets, was the bookshop of T. H. Morrell, at one time the rallying place for antiquarians interested in old New York and Revolutionary history. Mr. Morrell was more conspicuous as an "extra illustrator" than as a dealer in rare books, although he had acquired a knowledge of and trafficked to a considerable extent in the latter. His pronounced penchant was for books on the drama, New York City, and the American Revolution. Although the books he "extra illustrated" were for sale when completed—unless executed to order—he lavished upon

them all the skill and taste of an experienced and enthusiastic amateur. His knowledge of the class of prints to which he confined his attention was thorough, and he inserted in his books the choicest and rarest that he could procure. When necessary he had them repaired and restored by George Trent, that unequalled adept in the art of cleaning, mending, and inlaying books and prints, and then consigned the volumes to the skillful hands of the binder, William Matthews.

A lasting monument to Mr. Morrell's zeal and industry is the copy of Dr. Francis's "Old New York," which he illustrated and extended to nine volumes. This book finally came into the possession of Mr. J. H. V. Arnold, and at his sale was purchased by Joseph Sabin for Robert L. Stuart at a cost of \$230 per volume. It contains over twenty-five hundred prints, water-color drawings and autographs, and among the latter are either letters or signatures of all the mayors of New York up to the time the book was completed. It is by far the most extensively illustrated copy of any book upon New York local history, and will probably never be equalled, for there are no prints which have become so scarce

as those which relate to old New York. The lithographic plates in Valentine's "Manual," which earlier collectors affected to despise and hesitated to use, have become Hobson's choice with the "extra illustrator" of this fair city of Gotham of to-day.

Mr. Morrell had always betrayed strong dramatic proclivities, and he finally donned the tragedian's garb. His formal entrance to the stage was made in the character of Cardinal Richelieu, and he selected Philadelphia as the scene of the first and, as I am informed, last public exhibition of his histrionic ability.

A few steps further up Nassau Street (No. 140) brought the book-hunter on his rambles to "Old Hollingsworth's," who afterward migrated to the east side of Broadway, near Great Jones Street. He dealt in prints and old magazines; and although his shop was a mere cubby-hole, it was well for the book or print collector to make in it occasionally a tentative cast of his drag-net.

Around the corner, in Fulton Street, was the store of Timothy Reeve and Company, who dealt exclusively in imported rare and

standard books, which they sold at retail and to the trade generally throughout the country. They relinquished business in 1866, and were succeeded by the present firm of S. B. Luyster and Company.

Allan Ebbs was located on the west side of Broadway, near Fulton Street. His specialty was high-class and handsomely bound English books. In 1870, with his family, he took passage for Europe, and was lost on the "City of Boston."

C. S. Francis should have had an earlier place in these sketches. He came to the city in 1826 and opened a store at 189 Broadway, near Dey Street. From there he removed to 252 Broadway, under the famous old Peale's Museum. For many years his store was the headquarters for men of letters and lovers of books. His brother, D. G. Francis, who succeeded him in business, although advanced in years, has only within the last few months relinquished the management of the oldest established bookstore in this city.

Mr. C. S. Francis published the first American edition of "Aurora Leigh"; and the writer has in his possession Mrs. Brown-

ing's note in relation to Mr. Francis's acquisition of the copyright, which reads as follows: "Having received what I consider to be sufficient remuneration for my poem of 'Aurora Leigh' from Mr. Francis, of New York, it is my earnest desire that his right in this and future editions of the same may not be interfered with." This warning to trespassers is prominently displayed in the edition published by Mr. Francis in 1857.

C. B. Richardson, bookseller and publisher of the *Historical Magazine*, Pollard's "History of the Rebellion," and a number of Southern books, occupied with the old-established firm of book auctioneers, Bangs, Merwin and Company, a building at No. 594 Broadway, near Houston Street. Mr. Richardson suffered a partial loss of his stock in a conflagration on the 19th of September 1864, which at the same time destroyed many rare volumes, the property of Thomas Aspinwall, U. S. Consul to London, the collector of many of the choice books of the late S. L. M. Barlow.

Astor Place was for some time and until quite recently a bookselling and publishing centre. Here were established John Wiley

and Son, whose business consisted largely of the importation of books bought to order in Europe. Mr. Lenox obtained through their agency his beautiful copy of the Mazarin Bible, the finest of the only two copies of this monument of typography that have ever been brought to this country.

The figure of "Old Cronin" bending beneath the weight of the ponderous folios and quartos, which were his principal stock in trade, has been for many years a familiar spectacle in the down-town streets of New York. I am told that he still lives and plies his trade, although he has become quite blind. Another original character incidentally and spasmodically engaged in the old book business was "Jimmy" Lawlor, who kept an uninviting little shop at the lower end of University Place. For a time he enjoyed a virtual monopoly of a fruitful source of book supply. He would purchase by the cubic foot the contents of old garrets, and bought many of his books by the pound, together with the household pots, kettles and pans. The valuable books that occasionally turned up in these job lots cost him next to nothing, and were cheap to his customers if he charged a profit of

one thousand per cent. Acquisitions from this source required careful collation on the part of the buyer; still it was surprising how much knowledge of books Mr. Lawlor picked up in the course of his business career.

Other dealers in second-hand books in New York thirty to sixty years ago were M'Elrath and Bangs, Calvin Blanchard, Samuel Rayner, Charles B. Norton, and John Doyle, whose signboard modestly declared his place of business in Nassau Street to be "the moral centre of the intellectual world."

The old bookshops of the metropolis before the Civil War were for the most part small and unpretentious; but good books and rare ones were constantly to be found in them by alert, persevering and intelligent collectors, and in those days it did not, as it unfortunately does now, require the bank account of a millionaire to ride the hobby of book collecting or indulge in the kindred pursuit of the gentle art of angling.

Indulgence in fond recollections of by-gone days is considered an infallible sign of approaching senility, and we are assured that the present days are a vast improvement upon any that have preceded them.

Doubtless they are—with exceptions—for the book-hunter with a slender purse beyond all question has seen his best days in this or any other land. Alike from the Quay Voltaire, Piccadilly and Nassau Street,

“—the fabled treasure flees,
Grown rarer with the fleeting years,
In rich men's shelves they take their ease.”

—ALDINE'S BODONIS ELZEVIRS.

Nevertheless, according to Edmund Gosse, there is a pleasure still attendant upon the collector in his poverty—a happiness he shares with gentle Elia (whom for his bibliomania we love the more), namely, “the exquisite pleasure of buying what he knows he can't afford.”

When the first of these sketches appeared I was confronted with this query from an old and respected member of the bookselling fraternity: “What is the use of writing about these men? They were simply dealers, and bought and sold books as so much merchandise for profit, and that was all there was to it.” Not quite all, my good friend. An old bookshop is a mental tonic to one who merely whiles away an idle hour therein. I am loath to believe that one can pass his entire life among books, even in the way of sordid trade, without imbib-

ing—it may be in only a superficial manner—a modicum of the wit, wisdom and philosophy they contain, and thereby becoming a less commonplace fraction of the mass of humanity. But this may be only a bibliomaniac's fancy, liable to be shattered by the first passing breath of common-sense criticism.



PART THE SECOND



THE FIRST ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE
PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK

Engraved on Copper by E.D. French, from the Original in the NEW YORK MAGAZINE, 1793.



GOVERNMENT HOUSE.



*The longest age is but a winter's day ;
Some break their fast, and then depart away ;
Others stay dinner and depart full fed ;
The longest age but sups and goes to bed.*

From the Parnassiad of the Columbian Magazine.

THE FIRST ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE
PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK

IT might have been assumed by Samuel Loudon, book-seller and proprietor of the *New York Packet*, that four years from the close of the War of Independence was too short a period of time in which to expect the citizen of the new-born American Republic to repair his broken fortunes and turn his thoughts from the din of battle and the tented field to the gentle arts and walks of peace. As the sequel proved, he did forestall somewhat the domestic mar-

ket for such wares, when in 1787 he ventured upon the publication of a literary magazine in the city of New York. It was patriotically christened the *American*, and was placed under the editorship of that American lexicographer and grammarian whose name has so long been the school-boy's household word, if not his terror, Noah Webster. This pioneer of New York magazines was ushered into being December, 1787, and in November, 1788, it quietly passed away, bequeathing to the Commonwealth an example of laudable though unsuccessful endeavor, and an octavo volume of 882 pages.

The *American* was without illustrations, so that the mantle of leadership in the army of New York illustrated periodicals, since become so numerous a body, rests upon the *New York Magazine*, the prospectus and first number of which made its appearance about a twelvemonth after the demise of its short-lived predecessor. It was continued for eight years without interruption, from January, 1790 to 1797, when it also ceased to exist, either from lack of patronage or for other good and substantial reasons unknown to the writer.

Magazines identical in scope and charac-

ter were established almost simultaneously in the two principal cities of the Northern States outside of the city of New York—the *Columbian* in Philadelphia, and the *Massachusetts* in Boston. The latter, as an illustrated magazine, was preceded by the *Royal American*, founded in January, 1774, by Isaiah Thomas. It was suspended at the expiration of six months, and soon after abandoned by him. Later it was revived by Joseph Greenleaf, and continued under his management until the beginning of the War. It was the last periodical established in Boston before the Revolution. It contains engravings executed by the patriot, artist, and silversmith, Paul Revere, including the portraits of Samuel Adams and John Hancock, which are, considering the pre-Revolutionary origin of the prints and the national fame of the engraver, the most interesting, as they are the rarest of all existing specimens of early American engraved portraits.

Copper-plate engravings were also used in the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, published in Philadelphia in 1775 and 1776, by Robert Aitkin. They consist of maps, plans and views, the most interesting of the latter being "A Correct View of the Late Battle

at Charlestown, June 17th, 1775," published in the number for September of that year.

It behooves the seeker of early American prints to bear the titles of these four magazines well in mind, although he will not run chock-a-block against them in the first bookshop he comes to, nor in the second. The *Philadelphia Magazine* is not quite so difficult to find as the other three.

The publishers of the *New York Magazine* were Thomas and James Swords, of No. 44 Crown Street, known for many years as publishers of books relating to the Episcopal Church

They recite in their preface that the proposed work will be printed with beautiful new type cast by the ingenious Mr. Caslon, on good American manufactured paper, that it will consist of 64 pages, and be published the first of each month. "Each number," they add, "will contain one or more copper plates representing some particular passage in the work."

The price to subscribers was fixed at eighteen shillings, payable upon the instalment plan; five shillings upon the delivery of the first number; five on the delivery of the sixth, and the remaining eight at the expiration of the year. The generous prop-

osition was also made, that if on delivery of the third number the work should not appear to equal the expectation of any subscriber, it would be at his option to discontinue his subscription under forfeit of the five shillings already paid. To non-subscribers the price of each number was two shillings.

The publishers appear to have launched their literary craft with some mental misgivings, and in an address to the public they humbly solicit the countenance and support of the native and free-born Americans, "whose characteristic has ever been to foster and cultivate the arts, and to reward honest industry by the bounty of a liberal hand." In conclusion they state that if "this appeal for support is merely sufficient to defray expenses the magazine will live; if it is inadequate it must DIE."

The magazine began its career with the respectable number of 369 subscribers. The list is headed by their Excellencies the President and Vice-President of the United States, and in its columns appear the names of New York's most prominent citizens, the Jays, Duers, Bleeckers and De Peysters, Richard Varick, Gabriel Eurman, Elias Hicks and John Pintard. There are also a

goodly number of out-of-town subscribers, among them Ralph Izard, of Charleston, and the Van Rensselaers, of Albany, and curiously, there are not a few names from that—in those steamerless days—far-off land of the blue noses, Nova Scotia. The *New York Magazine* certainly began its career under fairly promising auspices, and should have enjoyed a longer period of usefulness.

The literary feast which the editors of the *New York Magazine* spread before its readers was sufficiently diversified to suit the most catholic tastes. It embraced meteorological observations, historical sketches, essays, travels, hints on gardening, short stories, tales of adventure, Congressional reports, foreign and domestic intelligence, marriages and deaths. A large portion of its space was devoted to poetical effusions, and the editors appear to have made every effort to foster the budding American muse, and assist in its laborious ascent of Mount Parnassus.

The stories are either of the highly sensational or sentimental order, and are generally pointed with a moral. All are clothed in the stilted phraseology, ornate to the point of grotesqueness, that flowed in such full and turgid streams from the pens of

eighteenth-century story-tellers. The poetry leans to the pathetic and lovelorn, and is attuned to touch the tender sensibilities of the members of the gentler sex who were among the favored readers of the only literary magazine of the day. What a fluttering of maidens' hearts there must have been when this sugar-coated sonnet appeared in the department of "selected poetry":

THE BELLES OF NEW YORK

Charlotte hath charms to catch the roving eye,
And force the timid youth to heave a sigh ;
Maria, tripping lively through the streets,
Enraptures by her smiles the beaux she meets.

Sweet *Nancy*, how can any on thee gaze
And not in transport celebrate thy praise ?
In Wall Street oft I view that beaut'ous form
Which does my breast with soft emotions warm.

The Muse with pride and exultation tells
That fair *Rebecca* ranks among the Belles ;
All that behold her must admire her face,
And own each gesture is replete with grace.

Mary, a tribute surely now is due
To Hymen's fav'rite—and it is to you
When join'd in wedlock may you ever prove
The joys which spring from innocence and love.

Fain would I mention, in this present ditty,
 The num'rous fair ones that adorn our city ;
 But this sweet talk would soon exhaust my rhyme—
 Will therefore leave it to another time.

Aside from the record of marriages and deaths and a few local items of some slight historical importance, there is nothing in the literature of the *New York Magazine* that, if it had been totally destroyed, would have proved a serious loss to posterity or to the world of letters; but in its pictorial features we find matter of very considerable value and interest. The publishers builded better than they knew when they summoned to their aid Anderson, the artist, and Tiebout and Scoles, the copper-plate engravers, and bid them depict for the pages of their magazine the architectural beauties of the city of New York. Unfortunately, however, with these embellishments to tempt the cupidity of the print collector, they implanted the seeds of destruction in their work. What has become of the 369 copies of the *New York Magazine* that we *know* must have been printed? is as unanswerable a query as is, "What becomes of all the pins?" Presumably an edition of at least 500 copies was issued, and yet there is at the present time in all probability not

half a dozen perfect copies in existence. The one belonging to the New York Historical Society is perfect, and contains all the plates, but it required years of cat-like watchfulness of auction sales and patient groping through booksellers' catalogues to make it so. I doubt if all the descendants of all the subscribers named in the prospectus could muster among themselves a perfect copy. Some old gray garret rat in one of their ancestral homes might possibly pilot us to the hiding-place of a few of its sere and yellow leaves.

Illustrations in the *New York Magazine* are as delightfully varied in character as are its literary contents. Pictures of birds, beasts and flowers are there to please and instruct the embryo naturalist. Views in foreign parts are presented in great variety. By the magic wand of the artist we are transported in open-eyed wonder from the great Pagoda at Tanjore all the way to Kam-schatka, stopping long enough *en route* to catch glimpses of Mt. Etna in a violent state of eruption, and to stand aghast at the sight of a vessel with its shrieking, living freight, on the point of being engulfed in the Maelstrom of Norway. By way of fashion plates we are furnished with pictures of the

Esquimaux Indians, of Hudson's Bay, and the dresses of women in the Isle of Nio, in the Grecian Archipelago.

The titles of the illustrations to the stories suggest their romantic and sentimental character: "Her Sense had fled," "The Cornish Lovers," "Edwin and Angelina," "Alcanzar and Layda," "Despair, or the History of Delia and Lorenzo," "The Death of Adonis," and "The Babes in the Woods." What a waste of the engraver's time and skill! Would that some good fairy could have stood at his elbow and induced him to give us instead of these copper-plate platitudes more pictures of our beloved city in those olden times.

If we omit the portrait of Isaiah, the prophet, which we are hardly justified in believing to be a veritable likeness, we are furnished with only two "counterfeit presentments," those of the Revolutionary heroes, Generals Greene and Wayne.

Scattered through the pages of the magazine are a number of views of places in different sections of the country, of which the most important from an historical or topographical standpoint are the following:

"West Point from the North as it appeared at the close of the War."

“The Palisades.”

“Town of Kaatskill. Hudson River.”

“Inside View of the New Theatre, Philadelphia.” (A picture of great interest to the collectors of American dramatic illustrations.)

“A View of the Town of Boston from Breed’s Hill in Charlestown, and another of the Bridge over Charles River, Mass.,” will delight the eye of the Bostonian. When he has secured these prints, the engravings of a similar character that are to be found in the *Massachusetts Magazine*, Paul Revere’s noted engraving of the Boston massacre, and the print of Castle William* in the Harbor of Boston, he will have captured about all the graphic memorials of this early period in the history of his native city that exist.

The local topographical illustrations which give the magazine its unique value and importance to the New York collector remain to be noticed. They are, with one exception—that of Federal Hall—the only existing pictures of the places they represent, made at the period to which the magazine belongs, or, as far as I am aware, at any pre-

* Built by Colonel Romer, A. D. 1704, by order of the General Assembly of the Province of Massachusetts.

vious epoch in the history of our city. These engravings number ten in all, and seven of them appear in the first volume. Two views of the Monument and of the Lighthouse at Sandy Hook are of minor importance; the remaining eight subjects are as follows:

“An East View of Trinity Church” (the rebuilding of which had just been completed).

“A Perspective View of the Federal Edifice in the City of New York” (then lately reconstructed. As before noted, a contemporary picture of this building, on a larger scale, is to be found in the *Columbian Magazine*).

“A View of Columbia College in the City of New York.”

“A View of the Present Seat of his Excellency the Vice-President (John Adams) of the United States.” This is properly styled a “rural view.” It was the famous Richmond Hill House, built by Abraham Mortier, Paymaster General of the Royal forces. It stood embowered in trees and shrubbery near the banks of the North River, at the southeast corner of Varick and Charlton streets, on what was then the road to Greenwich. It was occupied in the

summer of 1776 by General Washington as a country residence, and afterward assumed additional historical importance as the residence of Aaron Burr, at the time of his duel with Hamilton. It was sold by Burr's creditors, after his flight, to John Jacob Astor for \$25,000.

A View of Hell Gate is the last illustration in Vol. I. With this plate the artist appears to have exhausted for the time being this valuable material for his pencil. No other pictures of buildings in this city appear until 1795, in Vol. V., when we are given a view of Belvedere House, a building erected on the banks of the East River, near Corlear's Hook, in 1792, by thirty-three gentlemen composing the Belvedere Club.

The January number of 1795 contains an interesting engraving of the Government House, so called because it was appropriated to the use of the Governors of the State, although originally intended as a presidential residence when it was thought that New York would be fixed upon as the Capitol City of the country. This building was erected on the spot where Fort George formerly stood, fronting Broadway. The view is taken from the northwest corner of the Battery near the end of Greenwich

Street, and shows a part of the city and some portion of the Battery.

In the same volume (October, 1795) we have the last of these attractive pictures of old New York. The series closes with a view of St. Paul's Church, which displays, in addition to the chapel, the lower portion of the City Hall Park, then surrounded by wooden palings. The spire of this venerable edifice still points heavenward, as it did in the days when Anderson drew its graceful outlines, but every other architectural landmark depicted in the pages of the *New York Magazine* has long since vanished as completely as the baseless fabric of a dream.

With the exception of a few comparatively large engravings, such as the memorial portrait of Washington standing on a pedestal in front of Bowling Green (also engraved by Tiebout), that *rara avis* among New York prints known as the Rip Van Dam plate of the Middle Dutch Church, and the "Federal Edifice" in the *Columbian Magazine*, the old periodical before us supplies all the engravings of New York in the latter part of the last century that to the best of my knowledge exist. These penciled records of the past are few and simple,

but precious in the sight of every collector of memorials of this goodly town of Manhattan, and in their modest, unpretentious way they supply important links in the chain of our topographical history.



PART THE THIRD

—

THE EARLY AMERICAN
ALMANAC

An Astronomical DIARY,
 OR, AN
ALMANACK
 For the Year of our Lord CHRIST

Containing,
 The Sun's and
 Moon's rising
 and setting, —
 Eclipses, —
 Time of High-
 Water, — Lu-
 nations, — Af-
 pects, — Courts
 Spring-Tides,
 — Judgment of
 the Weather —



Feasts and
 Fasts of the
 Church of
 England—
 Quakers
 General
 Meetings—
 Roads, —
 Tables of
 Coin & In-
 terest, &c
 &c. &c.

Being BISSEXTILE or LEAP YEAR.

Calculated for the Meridian of BOSTON, NEW ENGLAND,
 Latitude 42 Degrees 25 Minutes North.

The Year of the Reign of King GEORGE the Second
 begins the Twenty-second Day of June.

By *NATHANIEL AMES.*

MARS like a wild Infernal Fury, stalks,
 And marks his Steps in Blood where'er he walks;
 But Peace would from her Native Heav'n descend,
 And Olive Branches to the Nations lend.

BOSTON; in NEW-ENGLAND :
 Printed and Sold by JOHN DRAPER, in Cornhill ; RICHARD
 DRAPER in Newbury-Street ; GREEN & RUSSELL, and EDWARDS
 & GILL, in Queen-Street ; and THOMAS & JOHN FLEET,
 at the Heart and Crown in Cornhill.

Price Three Shillings per Dozen, and Seven Coppers single.



*“ The world’s a scene of changes and to be
Constant in nature were inconstancy,
For ’twere to break the laws herself has made,
Our substances themselves do fleet and fade ;
The most fixed Being still does move and fly
Swift as the wings of Time ’tis measured by.”*

Ames’s Almanac, 1760.

THE EARLY AMERICAN ALMANAC



HE first product of the printing-press which Stephen Daye set up under the shadow of Harvard College, before the walls of that infant seat of learning were fairly dry, was a pamphlet, “The Freeman’s Oath,” to which immediately succeeded an Almanac for the Year of our Lord 1639. We surmise the compiler thereof, one Mr. William Pierce, to have been a weather-beaten old salt, who having abandoned his seafaring

life and cast his moorings ashore for the remainder of his days, was ready to turn his nautical knowledge to practical account. He modestly disclaims the academic title of Philomath assumed by Almanac makers in general, and subscribes himself simply "Mariner."

The following year Daye covered his name as a typographer with imperishable glory by printing the first book ever issued from a press in this part of America, "The Psalms in Metre," or the "New England Version of the Psalms," commonly known as the "Bay Psalm Book," and to the bibliophile as

"One of the books we read about
But very seldom see."

One or more Almanacs were issued annually by Daye and by his successor, Samuel Green, whose name is conspicuous in the typographical annals of this country as the printer of "Eliot's Indian Bible," that extremely useful book which it is said no man living can read. Following in the wake of these early Cambridge printers, every enterprising proprietor of a hand-press and font of type during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries felt it his bounden duty—or

found it to his pecuniary interest—to provide the community with a yearly Calendar. Suspended behind the farmhouse kitchen-door, this silent monitor of the passing hours repeated from year to year its trustworthy predictions of returning seed-time and harvest and its dubious prophecies of rain and sunshine, heat and cold, until, yellowed with smoke, begrimed by constant use and thumbed to bits, the last fragment of a leaf fell fluttering to the ground. In view of the extremely utilitarian rôle they were called upon to play, it is not singular that old Almanacs not things of rags and tatters are difficult to find.

In those primitive days presumably few books beside the Bible, the Psalm-book, the Almanac, and now and then a printed sermon of one of the reverend fathers of the Church—Increase or Cotton Mather, Thomas Shephard or Samuel Willard—found their way over the rugged New England hills to remote and scattered Puritan homes. In the hard struggle for existence of pioneer life, with its scant hours of leisure, they doubtless sufficed for the intellectual requirements of the inmates. We are inclined to believe that the Almanac occupied a higher place in popular estimation than its

numerical strength (1 to 4) in this primitive family library would indicate. If the question of dispensing with either the sermon or the Almanac came to a vote in the domestic circle, we would not rely with confidence upon the staying powers of the sermon, especially if it were one of those highly impressive religious discourses which the divines of Massachusetts did on occasion preach of a quiet Sabbath day morning to a youth in his teens, in the presence of the congregation which during the coming week was to escort the culprit to the gallows, and under the blue sky of heaven hang him for the crime of sheep-stealing.

The feast of fat things that the makers of these harbingers of the new year strove to provide for their readers is thus humorously set forth by Dr. Franklin, in his Almanac "Poor Richard Improved" for 1756:

"Courteous Reader:

"I suppose that my Almanack may be worth the money that thou hast paid for it, hadst thou no other advantage from it than to find the day of the Month, the *remarkable Days*, the *Changes of the Moon*, the *Sun and Moon's Rising and Setting*, and to foreknow the *Tides* and the *Weather*; these with other Astronomical Curiosities I have yearly and constantly prepared for Thy Use and Entertainment during now near two revolutions of the Planet *Jupiter*. But I hope that this is not all the

Advantage that thou hast reaped ; for with a view to the Improvement of thy Mind and thy Estate, I have constantly interspers'd in every little vacancy, *Moral Hints, Wise Sayings, and Maxims of Thrift*, tending to impress the benefits arising from Honesty, Sobriety, Industry and Frugality, which, if thou hast duly observed, it is highly probable that thou art *Wiser* and *Richer* many fold more than the Pence my Labours have cost thee. Howbeit, I shall not therefore raise my Price because thou art better able to pay : but being thankful for past Favours, I shall endeavour to make my little Book more Worthy thy regard by adding to those *Recipes* which were intended for the Cure of the Mind, some valuable ones regarding the Health of the Body. They are recommended by the Skillful and by successful Practice. I wish a blessing may attend the use of them, and to thee all Happiness, being

Thy obliged Friend,

“ R. SAUNDERS.”

The curious hodge-podge of scraps of useful information, scintillations of native wit, and “proverbial sentences which inculcate industry and frugality,” as above set forth, is embodied in twenty to thirty small octavo or duodecimo pages, which are all that most of these miniature compendiums of knowledge contain.

The most important of these early Almanacs, from a literary point of view, are the “Poor Richards,” begun in 1732 by Benjamin Franklin, and continued by him and D. Hall for over a quarter of a century.

They contain the famous *bon mots*, reflections and maxims of the great Quaker Philosopher, which gained wide circulation at the time through the columns of the colonial press and later were gathered together in the shape of a discourse, entitled "Father Abraham's Advice to his Neighbors," and published as broadsides or in chap-book form under the title of "Poor Richard's Way to Wealth." This "discourse" passed through numerous editions, and was translated into a score of tongues, including modern Greek and Chinese.

Dr. Franklin informs us in his "Memoirs" that he endeavored to make his Almanac both entertaining and useful, and it accordingly came to be in such demand that he reaped considerable profit from it, vending annually nearly 10,000 copies.

Commanding higher prices in the market for rare old books than "Poor Richard," but solely on account of the typographical importance and greater scarcity of the imprint, are the Almanacs made by Daniel and Titus Leeds, the title-pages of which bear the heraldic embellishment of their family arms. Their Almanacs are better known by the name of the publisher than by that of the compilers. They were printed,

the first for the year 1686, by William Bradford, near Philadelphia, and from the year 1694 until 1742 in New York by the same printer. They are all of the utmost rarity.

The commingling in the column of the Calendar of Bradford's Almanacs of weather prophesies, wise saws, doggered verse, and epigrammatical paragraphs on every variety of subject, forms an amusing medley, and reminds one of the by-play or asides of the stage. We take as a sample page the Calendar for January, 1738—"A turbid air and rough weather." "Rain or snow." "Fools play with edge tools." "Snow." "This world is bad which makes some mad." "If snow comes now don't be angry." "Cloudy." "Snow, or I'm mistaken." Interlarded between these phrases are the Signs of the Zodiac, the Sun and Moon's Risings and Settings, Eclipses, Lunations, Time of High Water, Feasts and Fasts of the Church, and the Dates of Quaker meetings. Our friend Philomath adopted a very clever ruse with his prognostications. He strung them down the column of his Almanac word by word and left huge gaps between, so that with one oracular sentence he contrived to cover a full third of a month. It would be hard

lines indeed if he failed to hit the nail partially on the head one day out of the ten or a dozen he so ingeniously bracketed together.

Among the most interesting items in the column of the Calendar of Bradford's Almanac is one that fixes the date of the birth of New York's first printer on May 20th, 1663, and refutes the date on his tombstone of 1660.

Conspicuous among the disseminators of this evanescent form of literature during the last century were the Ames, father and son, of Dedham, Mass., who issued Almanacs consecutively for fifty years at the price of "three shillings per dozen and seven coppers single." Isaiah Thomas, of Worcester, Isaac Collins, of Trenton, and James Franklin, of Newport, R. I., were Almanac makers. Peter Stewart, of Philadelphia, published an Almanac to which he gave, apparently in imitation of Dr. Franklin, the patriarchal title of "Father Abraham"; Hugh Gaine, of New York, was the printer of the well-known and widely circulated "Hutchin's Improved." T. and J. Fleet, of Boston, issued for many years a "Pocket Almanac," which differs from most others of the period in that it is supplemented by a

“Register of the Commonwealth,” extending to sixty or seventy pages, while the Almanac contains less than a dozen leaves. This elongated tail of a Register wags the little dog of an Ephemeris to which it is appended most unmercifully.

All old Almanacs bear a close family resemblance, which extends to the inferior quality of the paper upon which they are printed. After the title comes an address to the “Kind” or “Courteous Reader.” Then appears the conventional, sprawling, disembowelled figure representing the “Anatomy of Man’s Body as Governed by the Twelve Constellations,” followed by an Ephemeris of the Planets’ places for certain days in the month, and then the monthly column of the Calendar begins with spaces left at the top and sometimes at the sides, devoted to reading matter. Frequently only alternate pages are occupied by the Calendar, and the intervening ones are filled with the overflow of wit and wisdom from the spaces, or “vacancies,” as Franklin calls them, in the Calendar itself. The pamphlet closes with two or three pages containing sundry items of local interest, tables of distances, rates of duties, and the like. In all Almanacs up to the year 1752, the old style

of reckoning was observed, the year beginning on Lady's Day, March 25th.

For the convenience of their patrons, the editors of these astronomical diaries provided them with blank memorandum leaves, many of which, covered with the commonplace entries of everyday life, still remain intact and in place. Those who parted with these little books often neglected, either through ignorance or indifference, to remove pages never intended for other eyes than those of the original owners. This is not a matter of surprise either to the bibliophile or the collector of antiquities. Many a treasure which comes to their net uncovers a dead, and to all appearances, discarded past. In the backs of miniatures still lie soft coils of braided hair, and the cover of an old book, with its inscriptions and interlocked emblems and ciphers, is often a poem in leather and gold, replete with romantic interest and full of sad suggestions.

The weather predictions of Philomath, it seems, were more to be relied upon if taken by contraries than literally, if the following story has any foundation in fact, although, to be as honest as the story-teller in the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," I don't believe one half of it myself.

A noted Almanac maker, wending his way through the country, halted at a farmhouse, and after watering his horse gathered up the reins to proceed on his journey, when he was informed by the attendant that if he went on he would certainly get wet. Glancing at the sky, in which he was unable to discern a cloud the size of a man's hand, he declared that he could see no indication of an approaching storm, and would take his chances. In about an hour the clouds gathered and the rain fell. Impressed with this remarkable fulfilment of the prophecy he had rejected, our traveler retraced his steps to the farmhouse, and offered the wiseacre a half dollar for the secret of his ability to so correctly forecast the weather. "Nothing easier," said he. "We have that old fool's (here he mentioned the name of the man in the wagon) Almanac in the house. For today it foretold fine weather and very dry. So I knew it would surely rain before night."

The line upon line and precept upon precept of these little waifs of books is quaint, old-fashioned literature, but quite as profitable reading now as it was a century ago. We have a sample of its quality

in the following extracts from "Poor Richard" and "Hutchin's Improved":

"I never saw an oft-removed tree,
Nor yet an oft-removed family,
That throve so well as those that settled be."

"For age and want save what you may,
No morning sun lasts a whole day."

"Avoid going to law, for the quarreling dog hath a tattered skin. It is better to suffer loss than to run to courts, for the play is not worth the candle."

"It is better to go to bed supperless than to rise in debt."

"Idleness is the key of beggary."

"For the want of a nail the shoe is lost, for the want of a shoe the horse is lost, for the want of a horse the rider is lost."

"Prayer and provender hinder no journey."

"He who looks not before, finds himself behind."

"A penny saved is two pence clear,
A pin a day's a goat a year."

"Cunning differs from wisdom as twilight from open day."

"It is remarkable that death increases our veneration for the good, and extenuates our hatred of the bad."

"Too much of one thing is good for nothing, so we will finish this subject."

We will accept this timely suggestion from John Nathan Hutchins—Philom.—and conclude this article with an "extempore sermon," which was published by the

same wise counsellor and guide of his fellow-men for the edification of the readers of his Almanac for the year of Grace 1793. If not a perfect model of pulpit oratory, it cannot be denied that it possesses the twin merits of succinctness and brevity:

AN Extempore SERMON,
Preached at the request of two Scholars—by a
LOVER OF ALE,
Out of a Hollow Tree.

Beloved :

Let me crave your attention ; for I am a little man, come at a short warning, to a thin congregation—in an unworthy pulpit.

And now, beloved, my text is malt ; which I cannot divide into sentences, because it has none ; nor into words, it being but one ; nor into syllables, because it is but a monosyllable ; therefore, I must divide it into letters, M A L T. M, my beloved, is moral ; A is allegorical ; L is literal ; and T theological.

The moral is set forward to teach drunkards their duty ; wherefore my first use shall be exhortation : M, my masters ; A, all of you ; L, leave off ; T, tippling. The allegorical is when one thing is spoken of, and another is meant ; now the thing spoken of is bare malt : M, my masters ; A, all of you ; L, listen ; T, to my text. But the thing meant is strong beer ; which you rustics make : M, meat ; A, apparel ; L, liberty, and T, treasure. The literal is according to the letters : M, much ; A, ale ; L, little ; T, thrift. The theological is according to the effects it works—first, in this world ;

secondly, in the world to come. Its effects in this world are : In some, M, murder ; in others, A, adultery ; in some, L, looseness of life ; in others, T, treason. Its effects in the world to come are : M, misery ; A, anguish : L, languishing, and T, torment. Now to conclude :

Say well and do well, both end with a letter,
Say well is good, but do well is better.





34 NA

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